

# PARISH OF BISHOPSTOKE

## **Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly 2011 held at the Methodist Church, Bishopstoke on Thursday 19 May 2011 commencing at 7.30pm**

**Present:** In the Chair – Cllr Susan Toher, Chairman of Bishopstoke Parish Council  
Cllrs Bateman, McKeone, Mignot, Roling, Shephard, Uren, Winstanley

Twelve members of the public were present.

**In attendance:** Mr P J Storey OBE, Clerk to Bishopstoke Parish Council  
Mrs C Taylor, Assistant Clerk to the Council

### **1. Welcome by the Chairman**

Cllr Susan Toher extended a warm welcome to all present at the sixteenth Bishopstoke Parish Annual Assembly.

### **2. Presentation by organisations receiving financial support during the year**

Representatives from Samaritans, the Methodist Church, Victim Support, the Hampshire County Youth Band and Age Concern Bishopstoke, each gave a short talk on their organisation and how beneficial they had found the financial support granted by the Council to have been.

The Police indicated the relatively low crime levels in Bishopstoke and the pro-active manner they and the PCSOs adopted to keep it this way.

Representatives from the Forestry Commission talked about the sensory play project in Stoke Park Woods which was part of the 'Chances4Change' project funded by the Big Lottery and designed to increase physical activity and mental well-being in all ages. The project also encompassed Eastleigh Borough Council's 'Let's go Play' designed to improve play value and experiences through natural and formal play in an adventurous environment. Construction work was almost completed and a formal opening of the facility would be held soon. Nick Hazlett, the West Beat Forester responsible for the Woods also emphasised the need for volunteers to help make the Forest a better place for visitors and asked that anyone with some spare time and who enjoyed working outdoors in a challenging location whilst at the same time looking to exercise more regularly should put their name forward. Further information was available on [senseandmotion@forestry.gov.uk](mailto:senseandmotion@forestry.gov.uk)

The matter of dog waste in the Woods and the unsightly practice of hanging bags of waste from trees was raised by Cllr Roling. Mr Hazlett confirmed there were three waste bins in the Woods with the emptying costs being met by the Forestry Commission and that he would consider more if external funds were made available to provide them. The three new information boards would carry notices about disposing of dog waste to encourage responsible actions by dog walkers.

### **3. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies had been received from Cllr Davies-Dear.

### **4. Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 11 May 2010**

Copies of the minutes were available to those present at the Assembly. Proposed Cllr Toher, Seconded Cllr Bateman, **RESOLVED** unanimously that these be accepted as a true record of the 2010 Assembly.

## **5. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Annual Assembly held on 11 May 2010**

There were no matters arising.

## **6. Chairman's Address and Annual Report**

There have been no changes in Parish Councillors during the past year and all work well together to represent the best interests of our village.

We have continued our regular support of village groups and organisations and other external organisations, and in the last year grants have been given to Eastleigh Homestart, the Asian Welfare and Cultural Association, Victim Support Eastleigh, Bishopstoke Memorial Hall, Friends of Bishopstoke Guiding, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Age Concern Bishopstoke, the Hampshire Youth Band Association, the Methodist Church, and the Samaritans.

We have also contributed funds towards the cost of tree planting in Brookfield, and have identified Bishopstoke Carnival as a community project to ensure this important and highly enjoyable community activity is able to continue. Our Armistice Service at the Memorial Hall at 11am on 11<sup>th</sup> November is always well attended.

Our partnership with Hampshire Police to provide a dedicated Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) to work in Bishopstoke also continues, and we have publicly supported the usefulness and value of PCSOs against media criticism.

Plans by the Street Pastors to extend their help activities into Bishopstoke have also been supported by the Parish Council. Street Pastors are an interdenominational Church response to neighbourhood problems, engaging with people on the streets and in night-time venues to care, listen, talk to and offer practical help to those in need.

We have a long-term commitment to the YZone Youth Centre at Brookfield, and despite recently announced cuts to the Youth Service we are determined this worthwhile venture should continue. As part of our interest in youth matters, Parish Councillors were given a presentation on the Start Tackling Alcohol Responsibly (STAR) project which is a youth initiative that aims to reduce underage alcohol misuse by working with young people, their parents and the community at large.

Our first year of responsibility for cemeteries and allotments has seen us updating records and rewriting rules and regulations to ensure we comply with all health and safety requirements. On 1<sup>st</sup> April we took over the responsibility for bus shelters in the Parish and over the course of the next two years we will be speaking to the Borough Council about taking on play areas and open spaces.

Also on 1<sup>st</sup> April we introduced our own Travel Token scheme for those residents of the Parish who are over state pensionable age and who cannot due to frailty or disability use buses or have extreme difficulty in using a bus, who have limited access to a household/family vehicle and who do not hold a free bus pass under the County Council scheme and are not eligible for vouchers in lieu. The initial response to this scheme is most encouraging.

Four years ago Bishopstoke was one of the first Parish Councils in the county to be accredited under the Quality Parish Council scheme which recognises those parish and town councils which best serve their communities by being actively involved in local matters, being properly managed and working closely with voluntary and community sector groups to local advantage. We are pleased to report that the Council has been successful in achieving re-accreditation and we are proud that our on-going commitment to our community has been recognised in this way.

For those wishing to meet your local Councillor, the Clerk and the Assistant Clerk to discuss your thoughts on our Parish and its facilities please call in to our Temporary Parish Office in the Methodist Church Hall, Sedgwick Road, on Wednesday mornings between 11.00am and 1.00pm. We look forward to seeing you.

## **7. Presentation of the Audited and Published Return for the year ended 31 March 2010**

Copies of the audited Annual Return for 2010 were made available to those present, as were copies of the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2011. Mr Storey, as the RFO, explained the procedure whereby the contents of the most recently audited Annual Return were somewhat historical but confirmed this was the norm. The document contained an analysis of the year's accounting together with explanations of variations year on year in excess of 15%. It went to the Audit Commission for examination and signing off. He was pleased to confirm there were no observations were raised by the auditor.

Mr Storey then gave short review of the finances for the year just ended and commented on where we went from here financially stating that we had ended the last year in a healthy financial position with a surplus of £48,646 of income over expenditure. However, this was exceptional and was brought about by considerable savings being made in the administration costs of both the Cemetery and the allotments compared with the same responsibilities and associated costs when exercised by the Borough Council and an increase in the number of burials and therefore income from that. In the future, some of this surplus would be ringfenced specifically for the purchase of land for a new Cemetery or more allotments – should a suitable piece of land become available. Aside from this, he generalised and stated that what came into the coffers went out with some £46,300 going back directly into the community. There was a small increase of £4,400 in general expenditure between the year just ended and the previous year attributable to the decision to employ an assistant clerk to manage the Cemetery and the allotments on a day to day basis.

This year's precept of £127,700 included an element to enable the Parish Council to take responsibility for ten bus shelters not already owned by it with a corresponding reduction in the Borough's tax and there had been a 1% increase over last year to enable the Parish Council to continue to meet its obligations and aspirations; this actually resulted in a small reduction in the council tax payable because there were now more council tax payers living in the Parish than last year so the tax could be spread more widely.

Mr Storey concluded by stating that the Council's finances were on a sound footing and that we complied with all statutory and other regulation in their management. Thus we remained well-placed to continue to improve upon the standards of service provided and looked forward to the new challenges of 2011-12.

## **8. Public Questions**

There were no questions raised from the floor.

*There being no further questions, Cllr Toher thanked everyone for attending, declared the Assembly formally closed at 8.50pm and invited all present to enjoy the light refreshments provided.*